PREDICAMENT OF WOMEN IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE, BHARATI MUKHERJEE AND MANJU KAPUR

A Research Proposal

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Women representation in Indian novels seems to vary in different ways. Some female characters appear as commodities of men's urges and desires, victims of marginalized oppression, and even as the uneducated and regressive members of society. This is not always the case. Through the progress and modernization of literature, women characters break away from these stereotypical representations as they become the powerful and resonating forces in different novels, stories and plays. Some female characters possess the characteristics of being manipulative, scheming, superior, and elite among many others. Even though we, as readers, have our own temporary notions of women representation, it is hard to isolate our own biases on them. Truly, women representations in the field of literature are ambiguous that makes us wonder if these circumstances mirror real life.

Indian Women writing in English is being recognized as major contemporary current in English language- Literature. The likes of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Gosh and Anita Desai have won worldwide acclaim for the quality of their writing and their imaginative use of English. These include the role of English as global lingua franca: the position of English in India. The Indian writers in English are writing, not in their native language but in a second language, and the resultant transcultural character of their texts.

Traditionally, the work of Indian Women Writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. The factors contributing to this prejudice is the fact that most of these women writers have observed no domestic space. The Indian women's perceptions of their aspirations and expectations are within the framework of Indian social and moral commitments. Indian Women Writers in English are victims of a second prejudice vis-a-vis their regional counterpart's. Proficiency in English is available only to writers of the intelligent, affluent and educated classes. Writer's works are often therefore, belong to high social strata and cut off from the reality of Indian life.

The majority of novels written by Indian women writers depict the psychological sufferings of the frustrated homemakers. This subject matteris often considered superficial compared to the depiction of the replaced and oppressed lives of women.

2. INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS:

Indian writing in English is now gaining ground rapidly. In the realm of fiction, it has heralded a new era and has earned many laurels both at home and abroad. Indian women writers have started questioning the prominent old patriarchal domination. They are no longer puppets in the hands of man. They have shown their worth in the field of literature both qualitatively and quantitatively and are showing it even today without any hurdle. Today, the works of Kamla Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Geetha Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai and Manju Kapur and many more have left an indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English.

A major development in modern Indian fiction is the growth of a feminist or women centred approach, that seeks to project and interpret experience, from the point of a feminine consciousness and sensibility.

Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity. The theme is from childhood to womanhood-developed society respecting women in general.

The image of women in fiction has undergone a change during the last four decades. Women writers have moved away From traditional portrayals of enduring self-sacrificing women towards conflicts, female characters searching for identity; no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status. A major preoccupation in recent Indian women's writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the woman's role at home is a central focus. It is interesting to note the emergence of not just an essential .Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement. Women's presentation is more assertive, more liberated in their view and more articulate in their expression than the woman of the past is.

Meena Kandasamy is a poet, fiction writer, activist and currently one of India's boldest and most badass young voices. Most of her works are centered on feminism and the Caste Annihilation Movement of the contemporary Indian milieu. She holds a PhD in sociolinguistics

and has published two anthology of poems, “Touch” and “Ms Militancy”, and a novel “The Gypsy Goddess”. Her most recent work -“When I Hit You Or A Portrait Of The Writer As A Young Wife” is a dazzling and provocative novel of an abusive marriage.

Anita Nair is a prolific writer in English, who has written everything from crime fiction to short stories, poems, and even children’s stories. She is best known for her novels “The Ladies Coupe” and “The Better Man”. Through works like “Mistress: A Novel”, that highlighted the changing relationship between a woman and her husband, Nair also brought to life the experiences of the everyday Indian woman in fiction.

One of India’s most noted authors and human rights activist, Roy was awarded the Man Booker Prize for “The God Of Small Things”, her debut fiction novel. Since she won the Booker, Roy has published a wide range of non-fiction, covering topics from the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan to a condemnation of India’s nuclear tests. “The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness” released in June 2017 marked her return to fiction after a 20-year-long hiatus.

A blogger and a writer, Madhavan writes under the pseudonym eM on her blog which is called the The Compulsive Confessor. Her first book was a semiautobiographical piece of work titled “You Are Here”. She is the daughter of N S Madhavan, the famous Malayalam writer. Madhavan is also a regular columnist at Youth Ki Awaaz as Aunty Feminist.

Novelist, short-story writer and children’s writer Anita Desai has many awards to her credit including the Padma Bhushan and The Guardian Children’s Fiction prize. Her novels usually revolve around working out the mystery of the inner life of her characters. They use stunning visual imagery to show this inner working, and many have compared her modernist sensibilities to writers like T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf.

Sunetra Gupta is not only an acclaimed novelist, but also a scientist and professor at the University of Oxford where she teaches Theoretical Epidemiology. In October 2012 her fifth novel, “So Good In Black”, was longlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. “The Glassblower’s Breath”, where she takes the takes the reader on a journey of the emotional, intellectual and sexual experiences of a woman, is perhaps her most defining work. The story of a single day in the life of a woman mixed with fantasies, memories, dreams and ambition of a woman who married a rich man encapsulating her struggle to conform to society’s standards.

An Indian-born American writer, Mukherjee beautifully explored the internal cultural clashes of characters most of whom were immigrants through books like the “The Middleman And Other Stories” and “Jasmine”. The stories of self-discovery of her female protagonists

always lead to interesting places, and in the existing crisis that ensues, a new self emerges, offering multiple answers to one question: Who am I?

Deshpande began her career writing short stories writing nine collections, 12 novels and four children's books. Three of her novels have received awards, including the SahityaAkademi award for "That Long Silence", which delves into the suffering faced by a woman of a woman whose controlling husband doesn't understand why a woman needs her own identity and an equal place at home and in society.

3. RATIONAL OF THE RESEARCH:

This research work attempts to show the problems and prospects of Indian Woman represented in contemporary women novelists. The major rationale of the research is to show the hurdles that women faced in the beginning and their empowerment through education, economic freedom, and new way of looking towards life, modernization, globalization and many more reasons.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify the major feminist issues explored in Indian Novels
2. To understand the problems and prospects of women in the selected novels
3. To interpret the measures of women represented in the selected novels
4. To compare different perspectives of the women novelists about women predicament
5. To figure out the solutions of the hurdles explored in the novels

5. HYPOTHESIS:

1. Women represented in the novels are the victims of orthodox social structure
2. Rising consciousness towards selfhood through education is quintessential in Women Novelists
3. Economic freedom and education empower women to take decision in society
4. Job and career gives women to boldness, contentment and self-realisation

6. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS:

The proposed research work entitled ***'Predicament of Women in the Selected Novels of Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee and Manju Kapur'*** examines diverse realities, ideologies and perspectives of feminist literature. It is analytical and interpretative in nature. For the sake of convenience of the present study following novels and a short story anthology have been selected.

1. Shashi Deshpande	*The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980)
	Roots and Shadows (1973)
2 . Bharati Mukherjee	*Jasmine* (1989)
	The Holder of the World (1993).
3. Manju Kapur	*Difficult Daughters* (1998)
	Married Women (2002)

The subsequent anthology goes with deep and abiding concern for ideologies and beliefs of established, privileged and patriarchal culture on Indian people. The novels explore distinct ideologies and perspectives represented in Indian novels. It is not structural or formal study of the literature.

7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The present study might prove significant in understanding various strategies and realities explored in Indian Novels. A wide-ranging survey of the issues and conflicts involved in this much contested field makes a very useful resource for students and general readers. The research will prove to be successful in addressing the issues related to in a way that promotes understanding of the complexity. Novels in the first phase revolve round a rebuilding of lost dignity, denied identity and distorted history. Their project is cultural rehabilitation of the past. They protest against patriarchal issues such as misogyny, miscegenation, polygamy and consumerism, identity crisis, existential crisis. They revolve round the cultural impurity of Indian societies before they were disrupted by the white contact. It should be essential reading of selected Indian novels in investigating new awareness.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The proposed study intends to interpret and evaluate the primary texts by using various issues, perspectives and ideologies feminism explored in Indian women writers. The topic of the research being interpretative, hence it claims for various research methods and techniques that would be applied to analyze the selected Indian novels and bring out the real value of the research. Hence, the research is descriptive and interpretative in nature.

9. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION:

The proposed research attempts to consult all the source materials on feminist novels of India. For the collection and organization of the research material, the researcher intends to visit

different libraries and consult the experts in the field to get better perspectives in shaping the ideas. In addition to this the material related to the present research will be collected from the related books, journals, articles, research works and online journals.

10. CHAPTERWISE PLAN OF THE RESEARCH WORK

The present research work is divided into six chapters for the sake of convenience of study.

Chapter I: Introduction

The present chapter will give comprehensive account of *Steps of Research* which constitutes Research Methodology, Scope and Limitations, Data Collection, Hypothesis, Significance of the Study and Justification.

This chapter would also deal with the brief introduction to prerequisite features of feminist novels in general. It will also highlight on the shortcomings and limitations of Indian feminist literature.

Indian literature in English has made bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of both thematic concern and various approaches. It provided a new angle of perception to the history, literature, gender and culture of different nations. It also lay its emphasis on many form of domination of matriarchy, patriarchy, upper caste, globalization. This chapter will concentrate on background of Indian women literature. In addition, the proposed chapter will highlight briefly on the biographical sketch of Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee and ManjuKapur.

Chapter II: Theoretical Premise

This chapter will consider the theoretical base or model to interpret various issues represented in the works of Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee and ManjuKapur. Post-colonial theory touched and interpreted different forms of manipulation, identity crisis of the person, question of patriarchy and culture, and conflicts and various other issues. The theoretical background is essential in evaluating the selected novels. Feminist critics like Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Elaine Showalter, TarabaiShinde, GayatriChakravortySpivak contributed much to feminist theoretical model. This chapter will primarily give a brief account of various issues and concepts in analyzing the selected novels.

Chapter III: Predicament in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande

The proposed chapter would increasingly concentrate on the detailed analysis of Shashi Deshpande's portrayal of women in orthodox family, their awareness and optimism. It will

concentrate on the two novels *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) and *Roots and Shadows* (1973). It will take consideration of feminist issues revealed by the same author to subvert the reality.

Chapter IV: Predicament in the Novels of Bharati Mukherjee

The proposed chapter will attempt to analyze the history and contemporary world of women represented in the selected stories. It concentrates on the Bharati Mukherjee's novels *Jasmine* (1989) and *The Holder of the World* (1993) which concentrates on the contemporary issues related to women in India such as identity crisis, dislocation and displacement. It also concentrates on the quest for identity, degeneration of culture and so on.

Chapter V: Predicament in the Novels of Manju Kapur

This chapter will focus on the description of small rebellious and intense power struggles show Manju Kapur's deep knowledge of the human heart. It concentrates on the feminist issues explored in her two novels *Difficult Daughters* and *Married Woman*. It aimed at portraying realistically Indian women's sense and frustration and their alienation. When women awaken, she awakens to the absurdity of life which follows the disintegration of familiar reality.

Chapter VI: Comparative Study of Women Novelists: A Perspective

This chapter concentrates on the comparative perspectives of the women writers of India. The selected women writers focus on the diverse feminist issues in their novels rather they have different perspectives and diverse environment in focusing the same.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

This chapter includes the brief survey of the entire process of investigation as well as the general summary of research experience. It will highlight on overall performance of post-colonial novels. It may take brief consideration of merits and demerits of selected novels. Following conclusions will be derived by the entire process of investigation.

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